

## **VIII. PARK OPERATIONS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The major issues concerning Eno River State Park were identified by Division of Parks and Recreation staff and the park advisory committee prior to initiation of the general management plan process. The issues have been divided into three categories: natural resources (see Chapter VI), capital improvements (see Chapter VII), and operations. This chapter identifies park operations issues at Eno River and makes recommendations for addressing them during the next five years.

Operations / management issues that are of significant concern at Eno River are:

10. Backpack camping expansion needs;
11. Operating budget shortfalls;
12. Staffing needs;
13. Seasonal barracks;
14. Open air camp use;
15. Former Girl Scout camp use;
16. Trail needs;
17. Canoe rentals;
18. Coille Quarry acquisition; and
19. Pleasant Green Dam

### **BACKPACK CAMPING EXPANSION**

There is currently one backpack camp at Eno River consisting of five individual sites. The master plan calls for a future backpack camp northwest of Bobbitt's Hole, still a desirable addition to the park's existing facilities.

If the park expands further into the Eno wilderness, the expansion would provide a good opportunity for an additional backpack camp. The park periodically receives requests for "expedition-type" camping, where users pack from one campsite to another. The park also receives requests for trips that are more challenging than the one-mile hike into the current sites. The wilderness area west and south of Few's Ford Access has many suitable sites for backpack camping. Selecting and establishing one camp area would meet an outdoor recreational need not available anywhere else in the Piedmont outside of Uwharrie National Forest. Other recreational resources in the region offer only the pack-in to one camping area, as is the current situation at Eno. Only the national forest offers the distance and terrain challenge that could also be offered at Eno River State Park. Camping currently occurs in the Eno wilderness area, usually without permission or knowledge of the landowners.

## **Recommendations**

After acquisition of the Eno Wilderness, the area should be investigated to identify a suitable site for a backpack camp. As soon as resources become available, the camping area should be built and opened to the public.

## **OPERATING BUDGET SHORTFALLS**

The budget for operations, equipment, and supplies is not adequate to effectively manage the existing park. All program areas are affected, including natural resource management, interpretation and education, protection and safety, administration, and maintenance.

Operating budget shortfalls continually result in equipment being out of service due to lack of repairs, severe shortages of interpretation and education supplies, office supply shortages, an unfunded seasonal employee position, facilities in need of repair, shortages of proper emergency medical supplies, inadequate safety and security supplies, insufficient construction supplies, and inadequate types or amounts of equipment to accomplish various jobs.

Since 1994, Eno River State Park has added 18 parcels totaling over 383 acres, and other land acquisition is pending or planned. A new picnic facility, three miles of trail and two visitor-use facilities – the Few's Ford picnic area and the Piper-Cox House – have been added. New permanent employees and new seasonal employees have been added with associated equipment, resulting in additional support costs. Occoneechee Mountain has been added as a satellite natural area. Eno River is a growing park and will continue to be so for the foreseeable future as the master plan is completed and land acquisition is hastened due to pressure from urbanization.

Visitation has increased substantially over the years, and all indicators are that this trend will continue, resulting in higher demand for support and program supplies. The park budget has not grown enough to accommodate increased size, facilities and visitation.. The budget has not even accounted for inflation or allowed for raises in seasonal wages or uniform allocations.

## **Recommendations**

Increase the park operating and equipment budget as follows in order to adequately operate the existing park. Purchase the following equipment to aid park staff communications and maintenance efforts.

**Table VIII-1. Proposed Operating and Equipment Budget<sup>1</sup>**

DESCRIPTION	NEED
Temporary/Seasonal Wages	\$15,411
Waste Collection	804
Pest Control Services	348
Lawn & Ground Maintenance Services	400
Electric Service	2,599
Natural Gas	21
Water and Sewer Service	117
Fuel Oil	610
Repairs - Buildings	1,500
Repairs - Air Conditioning Systems	300
Repairs - Carpentry	300
Repairs - Electrical Systems	300
Repairs - Plumbing	300
Repairs - Other Structures	300
Motor Vehicle, Tractor, & Boat Repairs	6,500
Repairs - Other	575
Service and Maintenance Contracts	322
Rental of Motor Vehicles	4,200
Rental of Other Property	175
Telephone Service	3,168
Data Processing Services	252
Postage, Freight, Packages	850
Printing, Binding, Duplication	60
Advertising/Legal Ads	360
Employee Tuition/Training Expense	600

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<sup>1</sup>This budget does not include salaries or benefits for permanent positions.

DESCRIPTION	NEED
Office Supplies and Materials	750
Date Processing Supplies	200
Film and Camera Supplies	100
Law Enforcement, Safety, Security Supplies	690
Other Supplies - Fire Fighting, Flags, etc.	200
Janitorial Supplies	725
Lumber, Electric, Plumbing	2,000
Agricultural/Animal Supplies	150
Sand/Gravel/Concrete Supplies	400
Structural Steel Supplies	200
Road and Park Signs	204
Other Construction Supplies	3,117
Gasoline	2,403
Oil/Lubricants/Hydraulic Transmission Fluids	181
Tires	947
Repair Parts - Trucks, Tractors, Boats, etc.	7,106
Clothing and Uniforms	3,900
Medical and First Aid Supplies	200
Scientific Supplies, Chemicals	116
Educational Supplies	250
Other Supplies	297
Miscellaneous Contractual Services	379
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$64,887</b>

**Table VIII-2. Equipment Needs**

DESCRIPTION	COST
Riding Lawn Mower	\$ 8,000
Walk-behind Mower	3,500
Tractor with Front End Loader	32,000
All-terrain Utility Vehicle	4,500
Band Saw	500
Compound Mitre Saw	750
Two String Trimmers	475
Push Mower	450
Three Folding Conference Tables	450
12-inch Table Saw	2,000
Bush Hog	600
Four Mobile Radios	3,600
Three Hand-held Radios	3,000
18-Volt Cordless Drill	200
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$60,025</b>

### STAFFING NEEDS

Present staffing levels are adequate for the current park size and physical plant. Additional staff will be necessary to operate and care for the park as the master plan is completed, the park is expanded in size and facilities beyond the original plan, a satellite natural area is added to the park's responsibilities, and visitation increases with park and population growth.

Eno River State Park is a linear park covering 12½ miles of river and has two major and four minor accesses as well as six neighborhood accesses. Distances between park areas place increased demand on staff time to cover and care for the accesses. Five accesses must be opened and closed daily. Current park care and services are adequate when the park is fully staffed but become sub-standard when positions are vacant.

Completion and expansion of the master plan, the addition of Occoneechee Mountain State Natural Area, and continued visitation growth will necessitate adding staff. Growth will add 3½ more miles of river, over 25 miles of trails, three more camping areas, more than 3,000 acres of wilderness, a major and minor access, two large quarries, several additional ranger residences and support facilities,

six to eight additional visitor-use buildings and two more gated accesses that must be opened and closed daily.

Park attendance has grown an average of 18,726 visits a year over the last five years. At that rate, attendance will exceed 400,000 in five years. Occoneechee Mountain, opened in 1999, is now seeing over 30,000 visits annually.

One additional ranger is needed to provide interpretation and education to increased numbers of visitors at Eno River and at Occoneechee Mountain, which is in an urban area with six schools less than a 10-minute drive away. The ranger will also be needed for increased patrols, emergency response, natural resource management, trail maintenance, administration and operating duties that will come with park expansion. Additional seasonal staff will be necessary to cover the programming, maintenance, operations, and visitor safety duties during peak-use seasons and the growing season when lawn and trail maintenance demands are high.

**Table VIII-3. Staffing Needs**

	CURRENT STAFF		PROPOSED ADDITIONS	
Permanent	Park Superintendent II	1		
	Park Ranger III (OCMO)	1	Park Ranger	1
	Park Ranger II - Lead I&E	1		
	Park Ranger II - Lead NRM	1		
	Park Ranger I	2		
	Maintenance Mechanic III	1		
	Maintenance Mechanic I	1		
	Office Assistant III	1		
	General Utility Worker	1		
Seasonal	8-mo. Assistant Ranger	1	3-mo Asst. Ranger	1
	6-mo. Gen. Utility Worker	1	3-mo. Gen. Utility Worker	1
	3-mo. Gen. Utility Worker	1		
	3-mo. Park Attendant	1		
	3-mo. Peak Load Attendant	1		
	8-mo. Peak Load Office Asst.	1		
	8-mo. Peak Load Naturalist	1		

### **Recommendation**

As new park land is acquired and new facilities acquired and constructed, staff positions should be added to cover the additional work load that park expansion and increased visitation bring.

### **SEASONAL BARRACKS**

Eno River State Park has difficulty filling seasonal positions due to local job competition. Rarely are all the seasonal positions filled, and it is common for half or more to be vacant. These vacancies result in inadequate care of the park.

The park is regularly contacted by persons who would like to work at the park if housing were provided. They cannot afford to work seasonally at Division wages and pay for outside housing. The superintendent receives several calls each year from students who would like to do internships in the park if housing were provided. Some have even offered to work for free if they are housed.

### **Recommendation**

As houses are added to the park through property additions, one house should be selected and converted to seasonal housing. Selection should be based on permanent staff housing needs, building condition, appropriate location, and adequate layout.

### **OPEN-AIR CAMP USE**

The open-air camp is located on the east end of the park near Guess Road. The camp was formerly a camp for children suffering from tuberculosis. It consists of approximately 24 acres with facilities including a lodge that is over 60 years old and three houses. The property is currently owned by the Eno River Association, which rents the facilities to graduate students and families. Proposed expansion of the park includes the open-air camp. During the GMP process, division staff examined the camp and facilities to determine how the area could best be used.

### **Recommendations**

The brick house located farthest from the lodge is in very good condition and could be used in the future as a ranger residence. It has four bedrooms, two full baths, and is already connected to city water. The former dump site behind this house needs to be inspected for any potential remaining problems.

Because the lodge and house nearest the Eno River (camp house) are built on the edge of a steep bank, this site would not be suitable as an environmental education center for young children. With some repair work, however, the lodge and two older homes could be used as a retreat center, which could be rented out to various groups for meetings and overnight use. There seems to be a demand

for an affordable overnight meeting center in the Triangle area. Groups might include DPR staff, other DENR agencies, church groups, and natural resource or environmental education organizations. Once the useful life of the facilities is reached, the buildings could be removed and the area maintained in its natural state.

Prior to acquisition of the area, the Division should itemize the cost of repairs to prepare the facilities for group use and a cost/benefit analysis prepared. Although the facilities are structurally sound, the site has water problems. The wells for the lodge and camp house have had contamination problems in the past. It may be possible to hook these facilities up to city water (2-inch pipe with high water pressure). The bathroom facilities in the lodge would have to be expanded to allow groups to use this building overnight. Other repair work would include making the buildings accessible according to ADA guidelines and determining or creating fire evacuation routes. It should be noted that if the facilities are rented out as a group and the lodge is made accessible, the two houses would not have to be made accessible. The heating system in the lodge, consisting of two wood-burning stoves and some electric baseboard units, should also be inspected and recommendations for heating the lodge made.

### **USE OF FORMER GIRL SCOUT CAMP**

The former Girl Scout camp encompasses 40 acres of forested land contiguous with the open-air camp off Guess Road. This area is state owned and is maintained by park staff for day use by organized groups. Facilities include three picnic shelters in very good condition and two pit toilet sites in need of repair. The area was examined by Division staff as a part of the GMP process to determine its best use.

### **Recommendations**

Remove the two-seater at the last picnic shelter and repair the other two pit toilets. In particular, provide natural lighting in the now-dark three-seater by removing boards above the door or by using heavy translucent plastic on the roof as a skylight. Future replacement of the pit toilets should be considered. Composting toilets or a better alternative should be decided upon in the next five years.

Repair and maintain the trails. Hurricane Fran damaged many trees in the area. Some of these need to be cleared off the trails and any dangerous situations eliminated. The trails also include some steep slopes that need stabilization to prevent erosion.

Prepare a brochure, leaflet, or booklet for youth leaders describing environmental education activities appropriate to the site, giving stream-study locations, a map of trails, etc. Because there are no large grassy areas on this site for Project WILD games, ball games, or similar recreational activities, this site would be best used for forest and stream studies.



## TRAIL NEEDS

Eno River State Park has approximately 20 miles of trails, and these trails receive heavy use. Continuing population growth and urbanization in the area around the park will add to future demand for hiking as well as other types of trails. More trails are needed to meet the current level of demand and the anticipated increased future demand.

The 1979 Eno River State Park Master Plan called for equestrian trails, and some were initially established in the park. A DPR review of the park in 1990 resulted in the recommendation that the equestrian trails be deleted, since the park had insufficient land for such trails. At that same time, the master planned horse camp at Few's Ford was also deleted.

There is still some public support for equestrian trails and interest in re-establishing them at Eno river. Planned future land acquisition should provide the larger land base needed for the 10-mile minimum length for horse trails. With the current land acquisition plans, the use of existing old road beds (which are currently designated as hiking trails only), and some utility easement corridors would allow approximately 12 to 14 miles of equestrian trails to be designated; only ½ mile of new trail would need to be constructed to complete such a loop system. Upgrade and maintenance of the existing trails plus the construction of the half mile of new trail should cost \$50,000 to \$60,000.

Expanding the equestrian trails as described above would also increase the amount of available hiking trails in the park, since hikers are allowed on all park trails. With the park's proximity to developing urban areas, any increase in trail mileage would be a significant contribution toward reducing the current user density on park trails.

When the park's master plan was written in the late 1970' s, few people participated in mountain biking. Since most biking involved traditional uses and road cycling, the master plan did not include biking trails. Since that time, mountain biking has become a popular sport, and area participants are calling for the establishment of mountain biking trails. Like equestrian trails, mountain biking trails have more negative environmental impact and trail-user safety concerns than hiking/walking trails. These concerns will need to be addressed prior to the planning and establishment of such trails.

Canoeing has also grown in popularity over the years. In fact, the 1987 report of the President's Commission, *America Outdoors*, listed canoeing as the outdoor recreational activity that showed the greatest percentage change in participants from 1960, 515 percent. Bicycling was second, with 382 percent growth. New durable and light materials have allowed boating in waters that previously were less navigable. Although no use figures are available and use is still light, canoeing activity has increased at Eno River over the years. The canoe access for Lawrence Road, shown in the master plan, is still needed.

The newly authorized Oconeechee Mountain State Natural Area has traditionally been a popular hiking area, and use will certainly increase when the state acquires and manages the area. There are numerous visitor-made trails over the property, some of which need to be closed, rerouted, or repaired. The quarry on the site presents particular dangers, with its steep slopes and loose rock, and there are sensitive natural areas and private property that need to be avoided.

## **Recommendations**

Acquire additional park land in order to expand the trail system and to keep up with increasing use. As new land is acquired for the park, it should be evaluated for trail use. Given the increasing demand for mountain biking trails, new land will be considered for mountain biking trail use. Existing trail guidelines and the goals of trail user safety and natural resource protection will be used in determining suitability for such trails.

When land acquisition is sufficient to construct the required minimum 10 miles of equestrian trails, and when horse trailer parking is constructed, equestrian trails should be redesignated at Eno River.

It is hoped that land added to Eno River within the next five years will be sufficient for construction of a mountain bike trail system meeting trail guidelines. If not, Division staff will respond to trail user needs by considering the addition of mountain bike use to the by-then-existing system of equestrian trails in the park and making a recommendation to the Division director. Both William Umstead and South Mountain state parks have accommodated bike trail use in such a manner.

If the Lawrence Road property is added to Eno River, a canoe access should be constructed on that site.

A single loop trail should be created and signs placed at Occoneechee Mountain that direct visitor use away from sensitive natural areas and adjacent private properties. The current many visitor-made trails should be closed by selected planting of the site. "DANGER" signs must be positioned on any trail that takes visitors near the quarry site, and visitors must be kept away from the quarry edge.

## **CANOE RENTALS**

Now that River Runners Emporium in Durham has gone out of business, the closest location for canoe rentals is in Cary, approximately 30 miles away. Since there is no longer a convenient place to rent canoes near the park, should the park rent canoes or seek a concessionaire to operate a canoe rental business? The superintendent reports that during the peak paddling season, the park receives five or six calls weekly from people wanting to rent canoes. Fewer calls are received during periods of lower water and cold weather. This level of demand is not enough to support a business or to warrant in-house canoe rentals.

## **Recommendation**

At this time it is not economically practical for a canoe rental business to be operated at Eno River.

## **COILE QUARRY ACQUISITION**

Downstream from Pleasant Green road, adjacent to the river, is the Coile Quarry. A narrow strip of state-owned land along the river is all that separates the river and quarry. The four-to-five-acre quarry and surrounding land are now a part of the state park.

The Coile Quarry has a long tradition of being used as a swimming hole. Although somewhat remote from park trails, there are informal, well-worn trails that lead to the site. Despite attempts by the former owner to actively discourage trespassing, it remains a popular swimming hole. Its continued use is indicative of public demand for swimming. One drowning occurred in 1993.

The quarry has some steep sides that rise up to 18 feet above the water. The steep slope and rocks make egress from the water difficult. Low bank is very limited, and gently sloping bottom exists in only one area. The water is clean and clear and supports waterfowl and fish. Water depth is believed to be 60 to 80 feet. A deteriorated low fence surrounds much of the rim. A gravel road (chained off) provides vehicular access to the site.

Now that the quarry and surrounding lands have been acquired for the state park, the question of what to do with the quarry must be resolved. An appropriate level of care must be provided for park visitors.

### **Recommendations**

Consult with the Attorney General's Office prior to acquisition to obtain guidance concerning safety and liability issues. Consult with the Park Advisory Committee on appropriate uses and management of the quarry. Thoroughly study the natural and man-made hazards of the quarry. Study and recommend the best long-term use of the quarry. Consider actively managing a swimming, fishing, and diving area. Investigation of the quarry should consider the leasing of the area and improvements that would be desirable. Be prepared to immediately post appropriate signage upon acquisition and to take other steps such as patrols to manage the area.

## **PLEASANT GREEN DAM**

A study of the Pleasant Green Dam is underway to determine what should be done to maintain the dam and area or whether and how the dam should be removed. Silt is building up behind the dam, which is old and is in need of repair if it is to stay. Dam failure would release silt downstream, damaging the river's health. The dam also serves as a barrier for fish migration. However, the impoundment behind the dam is scenic and a popular canoe spot.

Several older, obsolete dams have been removed from streams in North Carolina in recent years. These include the Rains Mill Dam, Quaker Neck Dam and the Cherry Hospital Dam. Completion of the dam study should determine the best course of action regarding Pleasant Green Dam. If demolition is recommended, steps should be taken to inform local citizens and park users as to why such a decision was made.